BENICIA BLACK LIVES MATTER

Symbolizing Unity & Human Relations

Benicia Black Lives Matter Statement on the Board of Trustees Recall Effort February 2021

We, the members of Benicia Black Lives Matter, stand in solidarity with those who oppose the campaign to recall school board trustees Zada and Maselli.

A campaign that is calling for students to return their families to in-person learning that fails to center the perspectives and experiences of Black families is one that should not be given weight or consideration. Indeed, both the economic consequences of the pandemic and the physical consequences of the pandemic are disproportionately shouldered by Black families. A recent New York Times article[1] and a CDC study[2] both drew attention to the phenomenon of mostly white parents advocating for reopening of schools even as their families and their children are less at risk. From the New York Times article, "Even as more districts reopen their buildings and President Biden joins the chorus of those saying schools can safely resume in-person education, hundreds of thousands of Black parents say they are not ready to send their children back."

The data from the CDC study shows that 62.3% of white parents strongly or somewhat agreed that schools should reopen in-person for all students in the fall, compared to 46% of Black parents and 50.2% of Hispanic parents. The New York Times article goes on to say; "That reflects both the disproportionately harsh consequences the virus has visited on nonwhite Americans and the profound lack of trust that Black families have in school districts, a longstanding phenomenon exacerbated by the pandemic".

The response to the pandemic and the current disparities in Benicia Schools represent two separate instances of government failing to deliver equity to Black Families. The recall of school board trustees Zada and Maselli will cost upwards of $300,000. This money could instead be put towards improving ventilation systems in all schools within BUSD, as well as protective equipment and modifications of classrooms for when it is truly safe for students and staff to return. Not only is the district considering asking students to return, even as the pandemic is raging and the virus is mutating, but money that could otherwise be utilized to shore up the infrastructure is instead being contemplated for a wasteful political grab that does not have the interests or safety of Black Families in mind.

For the first time in its history the City of Benicia will soon have an equity officer and a tangible plan for seeking to achieve equity. The School district is engaged in a similar conversation. This campaign is a stark example of how privilege and political access play out to the detriment of vulnerable communities. It is as divisive as it is thinly veiled. It cannot be allowed to succeed. The members of Benicia Black Lives Matter fully support all of our board trustees and oppose the campaign to recall trustees Zada and Maselli as it is not representative of the interests of our Black Community.

In Partnership,
Benicia Black Lives Matter

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About

*Benicia Black Lives Matter is a grassroots community group organized to address anti-Black racism in the city of Benicia. There is a lack of Black representation across City leadership, departments, and voluntary boards. The lack of Black representation tells a story of our complacency as a community and more so, the impact on our Black Benicians lived experience. The good news is, we can rebuild the City of Benicia into a better Benicia, one commitment and one change at a time – and we have a strategy to do so. Our Strategy: **Actively Commit to Change**. The City of Benicia must commit to a specific vision of what a better, more inclusive and equitable future looks like. For additional information see beniciablacklivesmatter.com.*

1 https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/01/world/one-thing-thats-missing-in-the-reopening-plans-of-us-schools-the-trust-of-black-families.html
2 https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6949a2.htm